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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 RANGOON 001035

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [BM](#) [ASSK](#) [NLD](#)

SUBJECT: THE NATIONAL LEAGUE FOR DEMOCRACY: MONSOON SEASON
BLUES

REF: RANGOON 924

Classified By: CDA a.i. Ron McMullen for Reasons 1.4 (b, d)

11. (C) Summary: The NLD CEC has established regular communications with ASSK and U Tin Oo. An ongoing NLD petition drive to free the two leaders has proven minimally appealing to party members and supporters, and has also encountered some regime resistance in Mandalay and Sagaing divisions. With the regime apparently ignoring the NLD and the party itself lacking plans for imminent action, NLD leaders assess accurately that the political environment is "rather quiet these days." End Summary.

12. (C) Charge d'Affaires, a.i. and A/DCM met on August 10 with NLD CEC members U Lwin and U Nyunt Wei. U Lwin, describing the overall political environment as "rather quiet these days," observed that the SPDC had made no overtures to the NLD since the party's decision in mid-May to boycott the National Convention (currently in recess). He noted that the regime seemed more concerned with foreign affairs than with the domestic political opposition, citing Prime Minister Khin Nyunt's recent travels to China, Thailand, Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia.

13. (C) The NLD is busy with an ongoing petition drive which, the CEC members said, "was causing the authorities some concern" (reftel). According to U Lwin, the party has received about 1,000 signatures at headquarters, but considerably more upcountry (e.g. Magway Division, with over 5,000 signatures). U Lwin said that the petition drive was an optional undertaking for regional party leaders and was "not popular everywhere," including Rangoon where many residents are "more interested in playing the lottery." However, U Lwin added, most members of the Veteran Politicians group (pro-democracy, retired government officials) had signed the petition.

14. (C) U Nyunt Wei said that the petition effort had encountered resistance in Mandalay and Sagaing Divisions. Local authorities had not physically impeded party members from signing the petition, but had put into place intimidating surveillance at signing locations. And, according to U Lwin, USDA officials (the regime's mass-member organization which carried out the 2003 attack in Sagaing on ASSK and her NLD convoy) had warned local NLD leaders that the petition campaign could provoke anti-NLD elements and "lead to clashes."

15. (C) U Lwin said that the NLD CEC now maintains quiet, but regular, communications with ASSK. "We hear from her on a daily basis," said U Lwin, observing with surprise that he and his colleagues were able to send in parcels and letters to ASSK "with no interference from the authorities." (Note: We have used other channels in recent months to send in briefing papers and other messages, but have received no substantive responses. End note.) U Lwin also said that the CEC has regular contact with NLD Vice Chairman U Tin Oo, who is in "good health and good spirits," via his wife who visits NLD headquarters daily. U Lwin said, however, that neither ASSK nor U Tin Oo have been allowed to visit other CEC members since negotiations with the SPDC broke down in May.

16. (C) Comment: The CDA, a.i. used this opportunity to re-extend the Embassy's offer to assist the party in any way possible, including capacity building efforts through public diplomacy programs. U Lwin and U Nyunt Wei did not cite any specific immediate needs, but intimated they would communicate the offer to ASSK. While the two elderly leaders appeared to be in good spirits, they revealed no plans for imminent party action and said that had no timetable or specific objective for the petition campaign. The NLD CEC plans to convoke the Committee to Represent the People's Parliament (CRPP) for that group's sixth anniversary in September, but has not yet developed an agenda. End Comment.

McMullen